CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Walthamstow Village Conservation Area

INTRODUCTION

This document is an “Appraisal” document as defined by English Heritage in their guidance document “Conservation Area Appraisals”.

The purpose of the document is, to quote from the English Heritage document, to ensure that “the special interest justifying designation is clearly defined and analysed in a written appraisal of its character and appearance”. This provides a “sound basis, defensible on appeal, for development plan policies, and development control decisions” and also forms the basis for further work on design guidance and enhancement proposals.

This Appraisal describes and analyses the particular character of the Walthamstow Village Conservation Area, which was designated by the Council in 1967. This includes the more obvious aspects such as buildings, spaces and architectural development, as well as an attempt to portray the often less tangible qualities which make the area “special”.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

(i) National policies – Individual buildings “of special architectural or historic interest” have enjoyed a means of statutory protection since the 1950’s, but the concept of protecting areas of special merit, rather than individual buildings, was first brought under legislative control with the passing of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. A crucial difference between the two is that Listed buildings are assessed against national criteria, with Lists being drawn up by English Heritage. Conservation Areas by contrast are designated by Local Authorities on more local criteria, and are therefore varied in character. However, general guidance on the designation of Conservation Areas is included in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG 15), which sets out the government’s policies on the historic built environment in general. By 2005 there were eleven designated Conservation Areas in Waltham Forest.

(ii) Local Policies – Legislation and guidance has emphasised the importance of including firm Conservation Area policies within the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which must in turn be based on a clear definition of what constitutes that “special architectural or historic interest” which warranted designation in the first place.

Policy BHE13 in the "Built and historic environment" chapter of the adopted Unitary Development Plan 2006 is the relevant council policy concerning the designation and subsequent control of Conservation Areas within the borough. In addition Policy 4B.13 of the Consolidated London Plan (2008) produced by the Greater London Authority emphasises the need for boroughs to work with local communities to recognise and manage local distinctiveness, ensuring proposed developments preserve or enhance local social, physical, cultural, historical, environmental and economic characteristics.

DEFINITION OF SPECIAL INTEREST

(i) Location and population

Walthamstow is situated on the east bank of the Lea Valley, in what today is the London Borough of Waltham Forest, but prior to 1965 was part of southwest Essex.

Walthamstow Village Conservation Area, which was designated in 1967, is the surviving village nucleus centred on the ancient parish church and churchyard of St Mary's. It is situated near the summit of a hill on the rising ground between the reservoirs & former marshes of the Lea valley to the west and Epping Forest to the east. The Conservation Area is surrounded by largely late 19th and early 20th century development, which characterises much of Walthamstow to this day. The Liverpool St – Chingford railway line passes through the area to the south in a cutting and largely forms the southern boundary of the Conservation Area. The population of modern Walthamstow is approximately 85,680 of which less than 200 live within the designated Conservation Area

(ii) Origins and development of settlement

Domesday Book records that at the time of the Norman Conquest Walthamstow comprised four separate village settlements in forest clearings connected by tracks. The establishment of a church at the subsequently named Church End settlement raised its status, and as the "centre" of Walthamstow it prospered and grew, although in an essentially unplanned, ad hoc fashion, around the Church & churchyard.

The existing church originated in the twelfth century and Ralph de Toni, the Norman Lord of the Manor is credited with its foundation. It is however quite probable that a timber Saxon church existed on the site until then, and possibly even a preaching cross before that.

The Manor house of Walthamstow Toni, as the post-Conquest Manor was renamed, was erected immediately to the south of the church at the junction of Church Lane and Orford Road, where the Ancient House stands today. This 15th century timber framed "hall house" occupies the second most

important site in the area, and was in all likelihood erected and held by either the Lord of the Manor or the Church. To the south was the Church Common, originally called Berry Field.

Other buildings clustered around the church & churchyard, to the north a farmhouse called Eghams, to the northwest a house for the priest with its associated Glebeland.

The village Inn (the original Nag's Head) was established on the adjacent corner to the Ancient House sometime during the Tudor period (1485-1603), as was the George Monoux Almshouses immediately to the north of the Church, erected on a parcel of the original churchyard. This building , originally comprised the Almshouses, a school, and an associated feast hall erected in 1527 by Sir George Monoux a wealthy merchant, Alderman & Lord Mayor of London, and local worthy and benefactor.

In 1730 the local Vestry erected a simple eight-roomed house on a one acre site, formerly part of the Church Common, for use as a Workhouse and for meetings of the local Vestry, the local government of the day. Extended twice in the 18th century the building ceased to be a Workhouse in 1840 with the erection of the larger West Ham Union Workhouse in Leytonstone, but continued to be used for Vestry meetings until superseded by the erection of the first Town Hall in Orford Road in 1876.

Until the middle of the 19th century the parish remained essentially a rural area with a landscape of marshland, fields and forest. The scenic qualities of the area coupled with its close proximity to London had made it an increasingly convenient and attractive dwelling place for city merchants and businessmen, and their large houses and parks were scattered across the parish.

The original centres of settlement had changed very little from 1650 – 1850, and by the middle of the 19th century even Church End was still little more than a country hamlet. The second half of the 19th century was however a time of rapid and irrevocable change as London expanded over the Lea valley into Essex. The enclosure of the Church Common for development in 1850, and the arrival of the railways in the 1860's heralded the transformation of Walthamstow from a rural parish into effectively a Victorian suburb of London.

The centre of the emerging "town" of Walthamstow developed immediately to the south of the old village centre along Orford Road. Along with an extension of the National School and a cottage hospital, a new Town Hall was built there in 1876, and the centre of gravity of Walthamstow moved away from the old village centre.

(iii) The prevailing or former uses within the area and their historic patronage, and the influence of these on the plan form and building types.

The oldest and most important building within the Conservation Area is undoubtedly **St Mary's church**, which in much altered and enlarged form has survived since the 11th century and remains in ecclesiastical use; the spiritual heart of modern Walthamstow Village.

Built on an east-west axis the design and development of the church is largely typical of many other modest village churches of the period in Essex. The basic early-medieval church consisted of a simple rectangular nave measuring just 46ft by 24ft, with a sanctuary or chancel of unknown size at the east end. Originally built of flint rubble this modest original structure is now totally lost within the later extensions and additions to the church; a north aisle added in the 13thc, south aisle in the 14thc, tower and chancel extension in the 15thc, rebuilding of the tower in the 16thc and erection of additional chapels. Similar alterations and additions continued into the 20thc, by which time the building had taken on its current appearance, with the eclectic mix of building materials concealed beneath a coating of severe cement render.

To the north of the church, and built within the extent of the original churchyard are the **Mounoux Almshouses** erected in 1527 by George Monoux. This two storey building originally comprised a school, a feasthall for the poor, Almshouses, and accommodation for the Almspriest. The building was originally timber-framed and of symmetrical linear form, with two matching "wings" either side of a central gabled & jettied crosswing which provided accommodation for the Almspriest & school teacher. By the 20th century the building had been modified internally and was used exclusively as almshouses and offices for the Trustees of the Walthamstow Almshouse & General Charities. The west wing was unfortunately severely damaged by enemy bombs in World War II, and a brick-built replacement was erected in 1955. Whilst respecting the linear form of the original wing, the 50's addition is significantly taller and uses red facing brickwork and leaded metal casement windows, therefore compromising the symmetry of the original design. Late twentieth century additions to the rear, improving the size of the accommodation provided, has inevitably increased the depth of the footprint of the building, but its 16th century origins are still very evident.

To the south of the church, at the junction of Orford Road and Church End, and on the former site of the Manor house of Walthamstow Toni stands "**The Ancient House**", a 15th century timber-framed "hall" house of a type typical in Essex villages. Despite no longer being the Manor house itself, the building was clearly of high status and of considerable importance locally, so without documentary evidence it is reasonably safe to assume that it was still associated either with the church or the Lord of the manor. Two storeys in height the building originally comprised a central hall open to the roof with a central hearth, and gabled crosswings at either end. For centuries in residential use, by the 19thc the ground floor was occupied by shops, with associated shop windows inserted, and a first floor had been created in the central hall complete with dormer windows. By the 1970's the building was in residential use, converted into four flats, and by the end of the century the overall condition of the building had become a cause for concern. A sensitive restoration programme carried out in 2001 saw the timber frame of the hall

and west crosswing extensively repaired and restored, the dormer windows and half of the first floor construction removed, the exterior sensitively remodelled, including reinstatement of long missing oriel windows, and a factory in the rear garden removed. The level of accommodation was also reduced to three units; one in the central hall and one in each of the crosswings, The building now is a fine example of its type and one of the jewels of the Conservation Area.

Vestry House Museum to the west of the church was when originally constructed a fairly typical early Georgian building of five bays with a symmetrical façade. It was built in 1730 by the local Vestry for use as a Workhouse and for Vestry meetings, on a one acre site which was originally part of the Church Common. The building was enlarged in 1756, 1779 and 1814 to cater for ever increasing demands, and the front extension of 1779 with it's separate entrance for Vestry members fundamentally altered its original symmetrical appearance. From 1840 when inmates were transferred to the new West Ham Union Workhouse in Leytonstone, the building has had a multitude of uses: Walthamstow Police station, an armoury, builders storage, a private house, and since 1931 a local museum. The thirty year period between 1840 and 1870 when the Metropolitan police occupied part of the building is still reflected in a surviving cell and the now largely rebuilt Victorian cottages along Church Path which originally provided accommodation for members of the force.

Nearby fronting Church End are **Squires Almshouses** a simple but attractive and externally original terrace of single storey properties founded in 1795 by Mrs Mary Squires for six "decayed" widows of Walthamstow tradesmen who were members of the established church. "Decayed" in this context refers to a decline in wealth rather than physical deterioration. The original modest accommodation provided in the late 18th century has been increased over the years by the addition of small rear additions, and by internal reordering in the mid 1990's which saw the number of units reduced from six to four, although there were no external changes and the Almshouses still retain the original six front doors. Today the Squires Almshouses are managed by the Walthamstow Almshouse & General Charities based in the nearby Monoux Almshouses.

Apart from the school established in the Monoux Alshouses in the 16th century, the area also contains two other former school buildings, both purpose-designed and built. The earliest is the former **National School building** in Vestry Road erected in 1819, which was built to house the overflow from the Monoux school. Before the building was finished however a new policy was adopted whereby it became an independent school in its own right on the plan of the National Society formed in 1811. The building was designed to accommodate 100 boys and 100 girls and also included living accommodation for the Master and Mistress. In plan the building comprised a large single-storey central hall with the residential accommodation provided in two-storey units on either side. This simple layout still survives today although the upper floors are now no longer used.

The other former school building is now The Welcome Centre, but from 1828 until it closed in 1978 it was **St Mary's Infants School.** This modest building was one of the first purpose-built infants schools in the country, erected on part of the Vicar's Glebe by Reverend William Wilson. Similar in plan to the National School but two full stories in height, the building was substantially remodelled during the conversion to "the Welcome Centre" and internally the first floor has largely been removed.

A fourth school; **Walthamstow School for Girls** was erected in the area in 1913 and is still in use today. Designed and built by Essex County Council this now Grade II Listed building was designed in a neo-Georgian style and erected on what until that point had been the Vicar's Glebe. Two storeys in height and with a symmetrical "E" plan form, the design is in the manner of a Wren country mansion, with grand segmental pedimented entrance, modillion cornice and central domed lantern. Although extended and slightly altered over the years the basic design, layout and use still prevails and it remains an important and valuable example of the type with an imposing street elevation.

(iv) The archaeological significance and potential of the area including identification of any scheduled ancient monuments.

The Conservation Area contains no scheduled ancient monuments, but as a known pre-Conquest centre of Saxon settlement it is entirely within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ) as identified within the Council's Unitary Development Plan and is therefore subject to policy BHE17:

-The Council will ensure the preservation, protection and where possible the enhancement of the archaeological heritage of the borough.

The Council will seek to encourage the conservation, protection and enhancement of the archaeological heritage of the borough, and when any development involving a site of 0.16 hectares or more is proposed within an APZ or for any site identified by a recognised archaeological authority, the archaeological significance of the site will be considered. The Council may require a preliminary archaeological site evaluation before development proposals are considered.

(v) The architectural and historic qualities of the buildings and the contribution they make to the special interest of the Conservation Area.

The Conservation Area contains an eclectic mix of buildings covering a period of nearly 900 years. The key buildings within the area are undoubtedly the church and the later surviving medieval and Georgian buildings, all of which are Listed or locally listed in recognition of their architectural or historic interest. With varying degrees of alteration and adaptation over the years most are still in original condition if not use, and represent good examples of the different building types, all contained within a compact area.

(vi) The contribution made by key unlisted buildings in the area:

Across the churchyard from the main entrance to St Mary's church stands The Welcome Centre, an altered late Georgian building which until the 1970's was **St Mary's Infants school.** This attractive but modest two-storey brick building has both architectural and historic interest, in recognition of which it is included on the Council's local list. It is of considerable historic interest, being one of the first purpose-built infants school buildings in England, erected by Reverend William Wilson in 1828. The school originally catered for children aged 2-7 years and was a preparatory school for poor children who then went to St Mary's National school in Vestry Road. Probably its most celebrated "pupils" were the three native children abducted from Tierra del Fuego by Captain FitzRoy, captain of the Beagle in 1830. Renamed York Minster, Fuegia basket & Jemmy Button, the children were "educated" at St Mary's before returning to Tierra del Fuego in December 1831 again on board the Beagle, but this time accompanied by one Charles Darwin. The building is now used for community purposes and is known as the Welcome Centre.

Across Vestry Road from Vestry House museum stands the National Spiritualist church, originally erected in 1819 on part of the Workhouse acre as **St Mary's National school.** Built of stock bricks and with its Welsh slate roof recently reinstated it was originally designed to accommodate 100 boys and 100 girls, with accommodation for a master and mistress. It ceased to be used as a school in 1906 and was eventually sold to the Spiritualist church in 1928. Suffering externally from the loss of its original sash windows and central chimney stack, the building is nevertheless a key survival from the early 19thc development of Walthamstow and in recognition of its architectural and historic interest it too is included on the Council's local list.

To the south of the Ancient House in Orford Road is the **Nag's Head** public house, erected in 1859 as a replacement for the original tudor village inn which stood on the corner of Church End/Orford Rd. Immediately adjacent to the pub are two former **Coach houses** now converted into residential use. Built of yellow stock bricks with Welsh slate roofs all three buildings were erected by Francis Wragg, who ran the original inn and until the arrival of the railways ran the stagecoach service into London for the wealthy businessmen who lived locally. This small group of Victorian buildings survives largely intact as a reminder of this dramatic period in the history of the area.

To the north of the churchyard on prominent corner sites stand two more buildings of note which add to the special character and appearance of the area. At 115 Church Hill stands **"Fairmount"**, a substantial and largely original detached Victorian villa of the 1870's, and one-time home of Francis Wragg; innkeeper, coachmaster, farmer and church warden. Situated at the junction of Church Hill Rd and Prospect Hill this distinctively designed double bayed property faces west towards the Lea valley, and would originally have enjoyed panoramic views. Opposite to "Fairmount" and now situated within the grounds of Walthamstow Girls School stands what was until the early 1970's the **Vicarage of St Mary's church**. A Vicarage has stood on the site for centuries, although this last surviving example only dates from 1903, and

the school itself was built on the vicar's Glebe. Now used for school purposes this substantial Edwardian property nevertheless remains largely original in appearance, as does Fairmount, and both contribute significantly to the architectural and historic interest of the area.

Further south on the two corner sites at the junction of Orford Rd and Summit Rd stand two substantial Victorian houses erected by Alfred Janson in the 1850's; **St Mary's Church House and Dunheved**. These properties, now extended and converted into flats, were two of a number of large detached villas erected just before the railway arrived and the rural peace of the area was altered forever. After this Walthamstow ceased to be a rural retreat, and as development increased smaller houses, most often terraced, became a more typical feature of the area. Built of yellow stock bricks with shallow pitched Welsh slate roofs, both are largely original in appearance and good examples of the type.

At the side of the Spiritualist church in Vestry Road is a much more modest structure, no larger than a lock-up garage which it could easily be confused for, but which is of considerable local historical importance. For much of the 19th century this small building housed the Walthamstow fire engine, originally hand-drawn but adapted to be horse drawn in 1863. **The Old Fire Engine house** was replaced by a larger structure elsewhere in Walthamstow in 1887 and after many years as part of a repair garage it is now used for storage by the adjacent church.

(vii) The character and relationship of spaces within the area:

The Conservation Area generally is compact and small-scale, divided up by small roads and public footpaths. The most significant of the latter are Church Path to the west and Vinegar Alley to the east of the churchyard. These narrow paths, recently resurfaced with a resin-bonded gravel finish are attractive and ancient features of the area linking up the old village centre with the more open traditional suburban developments to east and west.

Most of the open space that dominates the area is associated with St Mary's church; both the extensive churchyard and the small car park to the north. This latter feature, finished with loose gravel dressing, is sited between two areas of fenced churchyard, and sweeps up to the north side of the church & tower where the space funnels down to the church entrance, now surfaced with York stone paving. Beyond it divides into two "paths", the largest to the south which is of ancient origin leading through the churchyard to the Church Lane junction and the set-piece view of The Ancient House.

Lesser spaces exist outside Vestry House Museum (see para X below) and on the corner of Orford Road and Church End. This latter space is the site of the original village inn and more latterly a corner shop of 1859, demolished in 1959. Attempts to rebuild on the site have been resisted and in the early 1990's it was landscaped, much as it appears today, providing a more open

setting for the Ancient House and an attractive and useful space for the local residents.

(viii) Prevalent and traditional building materials, textures and colours:

The Conservation Area contains an eclectic mix of buildings from the 12th century to the present day, and therefore a variety of different materials and finishes are in evidence.

The church itself has since the 19th century been covered by an unattractive layer of Portland cement render, last renewed in the 1960's, which covers an assortment of building materials for the different alterations and additions to the building, including Kentish Ragstone and Tudor red brickwork.

With the exception of the Regency " Chestnuts" in Bishops Close, which is finished in the typical painted-rendered finish of the period, all other 18th and 19th century buildings within the area were originally finished in facing brickwork with Lime mortar. The more significant buildings already described all remain so today; an attractive mixture of brown, plum, red and yellow stock brickwork reflecting the materials and fashions of their time. The more modest brick cottages of Church Path have however been more altered in this respect, and a number have had the brickwork painted, rendered & painted, and even timber-clad & painted over the years. Where this has happened however the use of muted cream and off-white paint has generally ensured that the properties retain a picturesque quality, which preserves the character & appearance of the area.

With few exceptions traditional natural roof materials; Welsh slates, terracotta clay plain-tiles & pantiles, survive on most buildings within the area, with associated lead dressings, flashings etc and clay chimney pots most commonly in orange or red.

Similarly windows throughout the area are on the whole contemporary in style and materials with the date and style of the specific buildings involved. Double-hung painted timber sashes are the traditional windows for most 18th,19th and early 20th century buildings in the area, and range in style from hornless six over six flush-fitting sashes at Vestry House Museum to two over two Victorian sashes set in reveals at The Nag's Head, and to the pseudo-Georgian sashes at Walthamstow Girls School, complete with Edwardian horns. Metal Crittall-type casement windows are found in part of The Ancient House and on the 1950's extension to Monoux Almshouses, and painted timber casements on both Squires Almshouse and the original east wing of Monoux Almshouses. In all cases these are single-glazed, sometimes with discrete secondary glazing.

(ix) Local details;

Most properties within the Conservation Area reflect the style and design conventions of the time in which they were built and few features of note are

exclusive to this particular area. There are however a few external features worthy of mention that have especial local interest.

Prominently sited in Church Lane between the Ancient House and the churchyard stands a hexagonal “Penfold” type letter box originally in service with the post office between 1866 and 1878. This rare Grade II Listed example dates from 1869 and was originally located in Shrubland Road Walthamstow. Having been made redundant by the Post Office in 1965 it was acquired by the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society and kept on display at Vestry House Museum. However in the early 1970’s as part of an environmental improvement scheme for the area it was relocated to its current site and brought back into use. Sadly attacks of vandalism in 2005/6 caused severe damage to the box and after the last costly restoration it was taken out of service and sealed, surviving today as a local historical curio.

Immediately outside the entrance to Vestry House Museum is another local curio, and one with only tenuous links to the local area. The Ionic capital and a section of stone column from the portico of the General Post Office St Martin’s Le Grand and was acquired by a local stonemason when the building was demolished in 1913 and presented to the Borough. Its final resting place is outside the Museum, and whilst it has little local historic association it remains a talking point for most visitors to Vestry House.

Nearby, and physically attached to the building is an elaborate and attractive Georgian door and doorcase, complete with timber columns and leaded fanlight. This actually comes from Church Hill House, which was built in 1784 and was being demolished in 1933 when a Museum extension was being planned. The opportunity was therefore taken to add another fragment of old Walthamstow to Vestry House Museum, and it survives today as an attractive anachronism on the side wall of the former Workhouse.

Little original ironwork survives within the area, although the Grade II Listed neo-Georgian gates and railings on the Girl’s school frontage are particularly noteworthy and valuable exceptions, as are the slightly less elaborate gates to St Mary’s churchyard off Church Hill. With the notable exception of two reeded, Moorish-style bollards at the top of Church Path all other bollards, railings, streetlights, streetsigns etc within the Conservation Area are more modern additions. The bollards used throughout the area are D W Windsor “Light cannon” style, and the streetlights are simple steel columns given a retro “Victorian” look by the addition of D W Windsor “Lancaster” lanterns and a bolt-on kit of ornamental collars and gas bars. All ironwork is finished in black for ease of redecoration. Whilst these features are not original by general consensus they nevertheless add to the character and appearance of the area.

(x) The contribution made by green spaces, hedges and other natural or cultivated elements to the character of the Conservation Area:

The Conservation Area still largely enjoys a rural character, which is enhanced by the large number of trees found there, both on private and public

land. Trees are a particularly valuable asset to the area, especially the large number of mature specimens, the majority of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders.

St Mary's churchyard, divided by public footpaths into four distinct parcels, is the largest and most important area of open space within the Conservation Area. Apart from the historic interest of the hundreds of graves and tombs which it contains the churchyard provides a long established green setting for the Grade II* Listed church and Monoux Almshouses, and is an important area of nature conservation interest. Much of the established mature tree cover which dominates the churchyard is protected by Tree Preservation Orders, and the churchyard as a whole is designated as a Site of local nature conservation importance in the Unitary Development Plan in recognition of its special interest.

The extensive grounds of the Walthamstow Girls school to the west also contains several areas of valuable green space plus large numbers of mature trees of high landscape value, particularly around the site boundaries and in a cluster around the open air Greek Theatre at the rear. Apart from their attractive qualities these trees, along with those in the churchyard, provide a haven for local birdlife, although understandably public access to the site is restricted.

Of similar value both visually and in terms of ecological interest, albeit on a more intermittent basis, are the embankments of the railway cutting that traverses the area. These embankments are largely unmanaged and over the years become home to small woodlands of self-sown trees, shrubs and associated wildlife. As "Operational land" however the trees cannot be protected by Tree Preservation Orders, and they are therefore vulnerable to periodic clearance or unskilled lopping by the railway company despite local opposition when the plant cover is considered to interfere with the operation of the line. As a result, whilst a valuable visual and ecological resource, it is a potentially less permanent one than the trees in the churchyard.

The grounds of Vestry House Museum, particularly the rear garden area visible from Church Path is also of considerable importance. Recently relandscaped and planted with species associated with the Workhouse roots of the building, this is a valuable and much used open space and an attractive prospect for both users and residents of Church Path alike. Further along Church Path on the Vestry Road frontage of the Museum is a small triangle of grass with a handful of trees, now commonly regarded as public open space, but in reality a surviving fragment of the "workhouse acre" purchased in 1729 by the local Vestry for £6, and originally part of the Church Common.

At a much smaller scale, all the properties along Church Path have modest front gardens ranging from some 4.0metres to 7.0metres in depth and in general these are planted up with a variety of hedges, small trees, shrubs and flowers. This provides an attractive and colourful setting for the cottages, particularly in summertime, and also makes the narrow Church Path access to

and egress from the Conservation Area a delight for pedestrians during the day.

(xi) The setting of the Conservation Area and its relationship with the landscape or open countryside, including definition of significant landmarks, vistas and panoramas, where appropriate:

The Conservation Area is situated near the summit of a hill, and whilst historically this would have given the church tower considerable prominence on the skyline from the south, east and west, the later development of Walthamstow which now totally surrounds the old village nucleus has meant that long views into and out of the area have now largely been obscured. The tower, surrounded by the mature trees of the churchyard, nevertheless remains a key feature of the local streetscape, and in particular when viewed from Beulah Path & Orford Road to the south.

The Church Hill boundary to the north does however feature two buildings of this later development which now constitute significant features in the streetscape in their own right. By far the largest of the two buildings is the Walthamstow School for Girls erected in 1913 by Essex County Council on what was the vicar's Glebe. It is a substantial and symmetrical red brick composition in the form of a neo-Georgian country house complete with iron gates and carriage sweep, and a noteworthy local landmark. Immediately to the east, prominently sited between Prospect Hill and Church Hill Road sits "Fairmount" previously described. These two prominently sited buildings form a visual gateway to the church and churchyard on the northern side.

(xii) The extent of loss, intrusion or damage. i.e. the negative factors:

The external appearance and setting of most Listed buildings within the Conservation Area have survived largely intact, although the cement rendered finish of the church, whilst now of some antiquity, is almost universally considered to detract from the special architectural and historic interest of the building.

At a more modest level, the crazy-paving to the forecourt of Vestry House Museum is a curious anachronism that would be better replaced with more suitable surfacing, and the setting of the Grade II Listed 10 Church Lane is neither preserved nor enhanced by the unsightly wheely bins constantly on display on the frontage. This latter Council-owned detached early 19th century house also suffers from the crudity of design & construction of a rear extension built in 1976 as part of the conversion of the building into flats.

The former National School of 1819 in Vestry Road, now on the Council's local List, still suffers from the unsympathetic replacement of its original 6 over 6 Georgian sash windows with crude and inappropriate "picture" windows in the 1960's. The reinstatement of windows to the original pattern would greatly enhance the character and appearance of this prominently sited historic building, as would repair and redecoration of the doors of the adjacent Old Fire Station which is also owned by the church.

Immediately adjacent to the former National School is a small council-owned car park for the adjacent council-houses now managed by Ascham Homes. With metal railings and tree & shrub planting to the Vestry Road frontage the site is normally unobtrusive, but being ungated, unsupervised and poorly maintained, at frequent intervals it is subjected to fly-tipping, mainly litter but occasionally stolen vehicles, and can become something of an eyesore.

The churchyard contains many hundreds of tombs and graves, and four of the former are Grade II Listed in their own right. Whilst the most important tombs were restored as part of a two-year programme of work a few years ago, the condition of some of the other early tombs located in the western sections of the churchyard is clearly deteriorating as a result of root damage from trees, the ingress of ivy, self sown seedlings etc. A detailed survey of the tombs, particularly within the enclosed area of churchyard opposite 2 – 5 Church End, and an associated programme of repair/restoration, would be of considerable value in both keeping them in good condition and maintaining the special interest of the graveyard.

The western boundary of the Conservation Area along Woodbury Road is probably the weakest visually, as the boundary to Walthamstow Girls School here is largely defined by an unattractive 2.0 metre concrete-panel fence. With the impending extension/redevelopment proposed at the rear of the school, this boundary treatment is due to be replaced in the near future to the benefit of the site and Conservation Area as a whole.

Increased levels of traffic and parking continue to bedevil the superficially tranquil semi-rural character of the area. Extension of the Town Centre Controlled parking zone has had a positive impact on parking levels generally, although the Church car park is now subject to increased unauthorised parking with consequent detrimental impact on the setting of the church & churchyard. Through-traffic along Church Lane/Church End/Vestry Road also remains a constant negative factor which whilst “calmed” by speed tables nevertheless detracts from the special character and appearance of the area.

Graffiti is a recurring problem within the area. Those sites most commonly affected are the railway bridge parapet walls in Vestry Road, the doors to Vestry House Museum along Church Path, the stone Capital outside the Museum, and the “Penfold” pillar box in Church Lane.

Finally, the mini recycling centre prominently sited at the Summit Road junction with Orford Road, whilst a useful facility, is visually incongruous and unattractive and detracts from the setting of the mid 19th century “Dunheved”. This visual harm is sometimes compounded by the dumping of non-recyclable items alongside the bins. Noise from glass recycling also causes disturbance to immediately adjacent residents, as inevitably does the periodic emptying of the bins.

(xiii) The existence of any neutral areas:

The Conservation area is very compact, and at its centre every building and space is considered to contribute to a greater or lesser degree to its special historic and architectural interest. At its western edge however is the architecturally undistinguished Church Hill Nursery School, a single storey building erected in 1969 on part of the Walthamstow Girls School site. Provided the established trees within the curtilage are not harmed and signage remains discrete the building and use neither preserve nor detract from the character or appearance of the Conservation Area and it is therefore considered to be a neutral area.

Guy Osborne
CONSERVATION OFFICER

MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS

Walthamstow Village Conservation Area

(i) Legislative background

The designation of a Conservation Area and production of an Appraisal document is not an end in itself. The Appraisal provides the basis for developing management proposals for the Conservation Area that fulfil the general duty placed on the local authority under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, now formalised in BV 219c, to draw up and publish such proposals. The purpose of this document is to present draft proposals which seek to achieve the preservation and enhancement of the special character of the Conservation Area, informed by the Appraisal, for consultation. The special qualities of the Conservation Area have been identified as part of the appraisal process in the first part of this document, and both will be subject to monitoring and review. This guidance draws on the themes identified in the Appraisal, and satisfies the statutory requirement of section 71(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, namely:

"It shall be the duty of the local planning authority from time to time to formulate and publish proposals for the preservation and enhancement of any parts of their area which are Conservation Areas".

This document reflects Government guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 "Planning and the Historic Environment", English Heritage guidance set out in "Guidance on the Management of Conservation Areas", policies within the Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan 2006, and guidance contained in the published Conservation Area leaflet for the Walthamstow Village Conservation Area.

(ii) Statutory controls

Designation as a Conservation Area brings with it a degree of additional statutory protection under planning legislation aimed at assisting the "preservation or enhancement" of the area. These controls include the need for Conservation Area consent for the demolition of any unlisted buildings, the need for Listed Building consent for most works to Listed buildings in the area, planning consent for the installation of satellite dishes visible from the street, significantly reduced "permitted development rights" for alterations or extensions of dwelling houses, and the need for 6 weeks written notice of works to trees not already protected by Tree Preservation Orders. In 1977 an Article 4(1) Direction was made on the area which removed certain additional "permitted development rights" normally enjoyed by householders,

and as a result planning permission is also now required for nearly all works which affect the external appearance of dwellinghouses within the area. These restrictions are outlined in more detail in the Council's guidance leaflet "Walthamstow Village Conservation Area" and the relevant Article 4 Direction. It should be noted that flats do not enjoy "permitted development rights", and nearly all external works which would materially affect the appearance of flats within the area require planning permission.

Action: The Council will ensure that new development within the Conservation Area preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area in accordance with policy BHE13 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan 2006, the Walthamstow Village Conservation Area leaflet, and other published guidance.

(iii) Erosion of character and additional planning control

The Conservation Area Appraisal identified the following as issues which pose a threat to, or detract from, the special character of the Conservation Area:

- The high levels of car parking and through traffic within the area.
- The cement-rendered finish of St Mary's church.
- The deteriorating condition of some of the tombs within the churchyard.
- The crazy-paving to the forecourt of Vestry House Museum.
- The unsecured and poorly maintained nature of the Vestry Road car park.
- The inappropriate "picture" windows in the locally listed National Spiritualist church building.
- The graffiti that regularly defaces features of the area, particularly the parapet walls to the railway cutting, the Church Path doors of Vestry House Museum, the "Penfold" pillar box, and on occasion the stone capital outside the Museum.
- The plastic Wheely bins left outside some properties within the area, especially 10 Church Lane.
- The unsightly recycling centre at the Summit Rd/ Orford Rd junction, and the associated noise and non-recyclable dumping it generates.

Fortunately there are few examples of unauthorised works having been carried out, which could detract from the special character or appearance of the area. Where such works do occur however the Council will continue to take appropriate enforcement action, where it is expedient, to remove them or seek a retrospective application where appropriate.

The Council has a published Conservation Area Guidance leaflet for residents and businesses within the Walthamstow Village Conservation Area, and subject to resources provides financial assistance towards the cost of repair or restoration of original features to buildings in the area by means of Historic Buildings Grants. It also made an Article 4(1) Direction on the area in 1977 to ensure that all future external alterations to dwellinghouses within the area were brought under planning control.

Action: The Council will ensure that unauthorised development is subject to effective enforcement action wherever practicable, to protect the special character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Action: Within budgetary limits the Council will continue to offer Historic Buildings Grants for the repair or restoration of buildings of architectural or historic interest within the Conservation Area. Specifically St Mary's church and the National Spiritualist church will be targeted to try to secure the desired improvements raised in the Appraisal, along with any other properties that have been unsympathetically altered over the years.

Action: The Council should review the traffic management scheme currently in place within the Conservation Area and the impact & extent of the Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) to see what improvements can be made to address the issues raised in the Appraisal.

Action: Ascham Homes will be approached to try to secure better levels of maintenance for Vestry Road car park for which they are responsible, and the possibility of securing the car park by gates will be raised.

Action: A scheme of enhancement will be prepared and funding sought for the forecourt of Vestry House Museum to secure the desired improvements raised in the Appraisal.

Action: The Council should review the refuse collection arrangements for some buildings within the area to minimise the visual harm caused by Wheely bins.

Action: The Council should review the recycling arrangements for the area and a less sensitive location found for the recycling centre currently at the Summit Rd/Orford Rd junction.

(iv) Advertisements and signage

There are a number of non-residential uses within the Conservation Area that have or are likely to require a degree of signage/advertisement for their services or activities; St Mary's Church, Vestry House Museum, The Nag's Head, Walthamstow Girls School & Nursery school, and the National Spiritualist Church in Vestry Road. It is important that strict controls are maintained over the design, size and siting of signage and advertising in order to preserve the setting of the Listed & locally listed buildings involved and the special character or appearance of the wider Conservation Area.

Action: The Council will ensure that all advertising and signage proposals that require planning consent will respect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in terms of siting, size, number, materials, colours, illumination etc in accordance with UDP and other best practice guidance. Wherever possible the Council will take enforcement action against unauthorised advertising and signage which does not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area.

(v) Trees

Trees have been identified in the Appraisal as a major contributory factor to the special character & appearance of the Conservation Area. If not already protected by a Tree Preservation Order, anyone intending to lop or fell a tree within the Conservation Area greater than 100mm in diameter at 1.5 metres above ground level, is required to give the Council 6 weeks written notice before starting work. This provides the Council with an opportunity of assessing the tree to see if it makes a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area, in which case a Tree Preservation Order may be served. (The railway company however has exemption from this statutory requirement). Free professional advice on all tree issues, whether the pruning of existing trees or advice on suitable species for planting, is always available from Council Tree Officers 0208 496 6852.

Action: The Council will consider serving a Tree Preservation Order in appropriate cases where a tree of high amenity value is considered to be under threat. These will include trees within and outside the area where they contribute to the setting of the Conservation Area or views identified in the Appraisal. The Council will maintain and replace as necessary the street trees within the Conservation Area, and continue to provide free professional advice on all tree matters as and when required.

(vi) Setting and views

The largely sylvan context of the Conservation Area; it's "setting", is very important, and development which would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area or its setting, or which would impact detrimentally on views into and out of the area will be resisted. The important views are identified in the Character Appraisal, and the Council will seek to ensure that all new development respects these views.

Action: The Council will seek to ensure that all development respects the setting of the Conservation Area and important views within, into, and out of the area identified in the Appraisal. These will be protected from inappropriate forms of development.

(vii) The public realm and enhancement

The Appraisal has identified little in the way of surviving original floorscape within the Conservation Area, and most of the roads within the area and some of the footpaths have generally been surfaced using tarmac. Lighting within the Conservation Area is provided by replica "Victorian pattern" streetlights installed by the Council, which are considered to be attractive and make a positive contribution to the special character of the street.

The high levels of car parking and through traffic within the Conservation Area was identified in the Appraisal as issues which detracts from its character & appearance, and more needs to be done to address these.

The reinstatement of traditional paving flags or resin-bonded gravel dressing for the footpaths within the area currently finished in tarmac would enhance the character and appearance of the area and reinforce its special identity, as already done in Church Path, Vinegar Alley, outside the church entrance etc.

An audit of the public realm should be undertaken to identify any redundant features, opportunities for enhancement etc, subject to resources.

Action: The Council will seek to ensure that any surviving historic streetscape features are retained, and that any future highway works will bring a positive improvement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area in accordance with the spirit of the English Heritage "Streets for all" campaign.

(viii) Monitoring and review

The following actions are taken to ensure that the Appraisal and Management plan are accepted and acted upon:

- ***Public Consultation: The Appraisal and Management plan was the subject of a period of public consultation and views expressed as part of that process were considered when preparing this final draft for Council adoption. Consultation included placing the documents in libraries and council offices, consultation with local residents, residents associations and amenity groups, and providing hard copies on request. A letter advising of these arrangements was delivered to all properties in the area by mail shot.***
- ***Boundary review: The Council will maintain the current boundary of the Conservation Area and continue to review it over time in accordance with current Best Practice and guidance on the management of the historic environment produced by English Heritage.***
- ***Document review: This document should be reviewed every five years in the light of the Local Development Framework and emerging government policy. A review should include the following:***

(i) A survey of the Conservation Area and its boundaries
(ii) An updated "heritage count" comprising a comprehensive photographic record.
(iii) An assessment of whether the management proposals detailed in this document have been acted upon, including proposed enhancements.
(iv) The production of a short report detailing the findings of the survey and proposed actions and amendments.
(v) Public consultation on the review findings, any proposed changes, and input into the final review.

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CONSERVATION OFFICER